Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Sydney is our densest city, but we are lightweights internationally

Australia's most densely populated residential area is in Sydney, around the suburbs of Potts Point and Woolloomooloo, according to the newly released square kilometre population grid from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

"This is the first time we've released population data in a grid format," said Alister Nairn from the ABS, "and it means that it's now easier for people to make national and international comparisons."

"The grid is great for people using GIS - geographic information systems; statistical organisations worldwide tend to use geographic areas that are tailored around their collection processes and local administrative regions, the square kilometre grid is an established, easy to understand and readily comparable international standard.

"For example, the ABS designs statistical areas with suburbs and local government areas in mind, but the UK's Office for National Statistics uses a range of electoral wards, and the United States Census Bureau uses census tracts.

"These all make sense locally, but it means you have to spend a lot of time understanding areas from different countries when you are trying to make international comparisons, while the consistent size of the grid also simplifies local comparisons.

"So based on data from the 2011 Census and formatted for the square kilometre grid it's easy to see that Sydney has more areas of very high density - there are 21 square kilometres with more than 8,000 people per square kilometre - compared to Melbourne's solitary one square kilometre above this population density.

"Sydney also had larger and more widely spread out areas of high density living - 93 square kilometres of between 5,000 and 8,000 people per square kilometre, while Melbourne had 33 square kilometres in the same range.

"Brisbane was the only other capital city to register anything in these higher density categories with 3 square kilometres between 5,000 and 8,000 people per square kilometre"

"This all pales when you look internationally - London has 327 square kilometres with a density greater than 8 000 people per square kilometre," said Mr Nairn.

The GIS data file is available for download from the ABS website - www.abs.gov.au

Media notes:

- When reporting ABS data the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or ABS) must be attributed as the source.
- Media requests and interviews - contact the ABS Communications Section on 1300 175 070.

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